

Whitworth, P., (2014) *Gospel for the Outsider*, Durham: Sacristy Press  
**WITNESS – Reaching out to others**  
***(Aim for 20 – 30 minutes)***

#### **Ffald-y-Brenin Blessings**

Heavenly Father we take upon ourselves the mantle of authority that Jesus delegates to us and in His name we speak to every household in Hungerford and say to you:-

##### **1 Relationships**

We bless you in the Name of the Lord. We bless your marriages that they may be strong and whole. We bless the relationship between each marriage partner that it may be loving, forgiving, merciful and strong. We bless every intergenerational relationship within each household that there may be peace and love and understanding flowing between each one.

In Jesus' name we bless every network of wholesome and supportive friendship.

##### **2 Health**

We bless your health that you may be strong and well. In Jesus' name we resist any sickness or disease which seeks to invade this parish and to every person in the parish we say, be well, be strong, be healthy. To any who are sick right now we say we bless you in Jesus' name with a speedy recovery.

##### **3 Wealth**

We bless your wealth that you may have plenty to replace poverty. We bless you to have enough to live and enough to give. We bless the work of your hands that whatever you turn your hand to which is wholesome may be profitable. We bless every wholesome enterprise that is conducted by you that it may prosper and be successful. We bless the local businesses that they may be successful and profitable.

##### **4 Education**

We bless the local schools that they may be secure, safe places for teachers and pupils alike. We bless the children's capacity to learn and develop relationships and we bless their simple trust in Jesus that their trust may grow and become enriched.

##### **5 Church**

We speak to the Church and we say we bless you in the Name of the Lord that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God may flow out from you in power. We bless the hearts of all who live in the parish that they may be quickened to hear and respond to the Voice of the Living God. We bless all who live and work here, that the overspill of the blessings of the presence of the kingdom of God may fall upon you.

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# **LUKE'S GOSPEL GOSPEL FOR THE OUTSIDER**

## **1 Outsiders at the birth of Christ**

### **WELCOME – Breaking the ice** ***(Aim for 10 minutes)***

As you celebrated Christmas this year what drew you closer to God?

### **WORSHIP – Meeting the Lord** ***(Aim for 10 – 15 minutes)***

Ask the Holy Spirit to draw close and speak to each one of you  
Read Psalm 130 verses 5 - 7.

How much do you identify with the psalmist? In a moment of silence speak to God about what strikes you from this passage. Be honest with God for He knows you completely and loves you very deeply.

Conclude with a prayer asking to increase our trust and hope in His unfailing love. Then, pray for your group as you look at Luke's gospel together. Together may we become more Christlike.

**WORD – Applying the truth**  
**(Aim for 40 – 45 minutes)**

**Read Luke 1:5-80**

1 We will compare the responses of Zachariah and Mary to the news that both would have a child born as a result of God's intervention in their lives. I have characterised Mary as *the outsider*: a young, relatively poor teenage mother suddenly finding herself pregnant outside of marriage. Conversely, I have characterised Zechariah as *the insider*: a member of the priesthood with duties in the Temple, a more mature man who, with Elizabeth, had led a godly life (1:6). Do you think, for the purposes of this study and the thesis of the book, that this is a fair characterisation?

2 How would you describe the reactions of Zechariah and Mary to the news that they will have a child (see 1:13-20 and 1:29-38)? Is there any reason as to why they responded differently to the message of Gabriel?

3 How does the song of Mary express the theme of Luke's gospel? In what sense is it a charter for the Gospel (see 1:46ff)? Zachariah's song combines praise and prophesy in equal measure; what is striking about this father prophesying at his son's circumcision (the equivalent of baptism in the New Testament)?

**Read Luke 2:1-52**

4 In a very real sense Jesus himself became the outsider in Bethlehem: not wanted in the inn, he was wrapped in simple cloths and placed in a manger. What was God's wisdom in this?

5 Shepherds and Wise Men were the first to visit Jesus in the stable: why were they chosen to be the first to worship the Christ-child? What message does that convey?

6 Two pensioners, Simeon and Anna, first saw the Christ-child in the Temple: why was that? What did they have in common apart from their age?

7 What is the overall message for you from the Nativity, as recorded in Luke?

Taken from